University of Essex

University of Essex Marking Policy for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate work

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Contents

Purpose of this policy

The policy applies to all taught course students including the taught elements of postgraduate research awards and to assessment contributing to a mark at all levels, including level three. It applies to all academic departments or units at the University of Essex: it also applies to all Partner institutions unless specifically agreed otherwise. ‘Department’ can be read as interchangeable for ‘school’ or other equivalent unit throughout.

Principles

The University of Essex employs a proportionate approach to the management of marking, which seeks to safeguard the academic standards and quality of University of Essex awards and marking and feedback for all assessed work. The requirements set out in this policy are risk-based. Single marking with moderation by sample is the default across assessment, with double marking required for work where a higher risk is identified. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, situations where:

- there is a particularly high contribution to student outcomes
- the work has no permanent output, and therefore no retrospective assurance of marking quality can be performed
- the marker is less experienced, including Assistant Lecturers and Graduate Laboratory Assistants

The requirements set out in the policy are the baseline across the University and should not normally be exceeded unless there is a compelling reason to do so, such as the requirement of a professional, statutory or regulatory body.

Definitions

Assessment where the marking does not require academic judgement or is marked according to a defined marking schedule

A type of assessment where no subject knowledge or specific expertise is needed to complete the marking once a list of correct answers has been defined, for instance a multiple-choice exam, or where a marking schedule is used to define the marks to be given. The marking can be automated or manual.

Assessment with no permanent output

This is any form of assessment where the work being assessed is transient and cannot be reviewed by a moderator, second marker or External Examiner subsequently. This could include, but is not limited

to, performances, presentations and the observations of tasks to be completed. Where the student work is recorded it does not fall into this category unless the recording does not allow for the assessment of all learning outcomes for the task: for instance, a voice recording is not sufficient if body language is being assessed as part of presentation style. Where there is a record that would allow for a marker who was not present at the original assessment to mark against all assessment criteria then this recorded task is considered to have a permanent output and can be moderated accordingly.

Closed double marking

Two markers mark the work independently without access to each other's marks or comments about the work.

Credit

Credit is awarded in recognition of achievement of learning outcomes at a specified level. The University of Essex uses the Higher Education Credit Framework for England, and all references to credit in this policy are to the University credit frameworks for undergraduate and postgraduate study. While credit is not attributed directly to assessment within this framework, in this policy it is used to indicate the portion of assessment relative to the total credit-weighting of the module; for instance, '5 credits' would be an assessment comprising 1/3 of the assessment weighting of a 15-credit module or 1/6 of the assessment weighting of a 30-credit module.

Formative assessment

Formative assessments are those for which students may receive a mark, but which do not contribute to any module mark, award mark, degree classification or any professional requirements of a course.

Marking schedule

A marking schedule requires that the marks for an assessment can be applied without academic subjectivity although may require someone with domain knowledge to apply the marking schedule. The marking scheme must associate marks to a sample answer in enough detail that it is clear how each mark is allocated. In some cases, a small number of such marks can be allocated equally across part of an answer where it would be obvious to someone with domain knowledge how they are applied, for example a calculation with a clear number of steps or parts.

Moderation

Moderation is a process separate from that of marking and provides assurance that assessment criteria have been applied appropriately. Moderators review a sample of the marked student work and liaise with the first markers if they believe that the marks are not at the correct level or do not reflect the assessment criteria or feedback given.

Open double marking

This is where a second marker marks the work but has access to the first marker's marks and/or comments.

Single marking with moderation

Student work is marked by one individual. A sample of that work is subsequently moderated, including all fails above 20. Only one mark is generated for the assessment piece.

Single marking without moderation

Student work is marked by one individual only. This is used only for low-weighted pieces of work.

Summative assessment

Summative assessments are those which contribute to a module mark, award mark, degree classification or any professional requirements of a course.

Marking Policies

1. Marking requirements and procedure

1.1 Summary of marking requirements

Assessment type	Procedure required
All formative assessment Single assessment items which comprise the equivalent of 5 credits or fewer of the total module assessment load (e.g. 1/3 of a 15-credit module or 1/6 of a 30-credit module) Assessment which requires no academic judgement in marking or which is marked to a marking schedule	Single marking only, unless this is the first substantial piece of marking being conducted by a marker new to Essex. At least one assessment item for every module must be moderated or double-marked unless all require no academic judgement or are marked to a marking schedule.
Capstone projects, dissertations or equivalent and any single assessment comprising the equivalent of 30 credits or above	Open or closed double marking
Assessment which comprises the equivalent of more than 5 credits of the total module load with no permanent output	Closed double marking
All other assessment	Single marked with moderation

For all assessment types where students are formally issued with marks a check should be performed to ensure that marks have been correctly entered and assigned to the correct student.

1.2 Work requiring single marking only

1.1. Work can be marked by a single marker without moderation only if the assessment task comprises 5 credits or fewer of the total module load (e.g., it is weighted at 1/3 or less of a 15-credit module or 1/6 or less of a 30-credit module) or where the marking for this assessment type is done using a defined marking schedule or does not require academic judgement.

1.1. All modules must have at least one moderated piece of assessment unless all the assessments are exempt from this under 1.2.3. Where all items comprise 5 or fewer credits of the total module load then the highest-weighted piece must be moderated; where all items are equally weighted

but all individual items are below this limit the item to be moderated should be agreed between the markers and moderators.

1.1. Where marking either requires no academic judgement (such as a multiple choice exam) or is marked via a marking schedule (see definitions), single marking without moderation can be used. The Director of Education in each department is responsible for confirming that this is appropriate in each case. Where defined answer sheets are used these must be made available to the External Examiner.

1.2 Work requiring double marking

1.3.1 Double marking should be used for all capstones, dissertations or equivalent and for any other assessment worth the equivalent of 30 credits or more. This can be done via open or closed double marking; the decision about which should be used should be made at a department or, where appropriate, subject level to ensure consistency.

1.3.2 Where there is no permanent output of the assessment (see definitions) for any assessment task comprising more than 5 credits of the total module load (e.g. it is worth more than 1/3 of a 15-credit module or more than 1/6 of a 30-credit module) then closed double marking, where each marker marks independently without recourse to the others' marks and feedback, should be used.

1.4 Procedure for double marking

1.4.1 Double marking can be either open or closed; see definitions. All procedures outlined here apply to both. Each marker must produce a mark for the piece of work and these must be reconciled, with one mark agreed by the two markers, and not simply averaged.

1.4.2 Where two internal markers are unable to reach agreement or are unable to engage in reconciliation for any reason, the department should make every effort to resolve the matter internally. This may require involving a third internal marker to arbitrate by working with one or both markers to determine whether reconciliation of the two marks is possible or to act as a third marker. In exceptional circumstances the work may be sent to the External Examiner as an arbitrator. The External Examiner must be given access to written comments from internal markers on the piece(s) of work involved.

1.4.3 Where third marking takes place, the department should then agree a mark by reference to comments from the three markers, not purely by averaging.

1.4.4 In instances where a mark is not agreed upon after involving a third marker, departments should seek further guidance and advice from the Faculty Dean in the first instance, with support from the Quality and Academic Development team.

1.5 Work requiring single marking with moderation

1.5.1 For all other types of assessment that do not fall into the categories outlined in sections 1.2 or 1.3, single marking can be used but must be followed by moderation.

1.6 Procedure for moderation

1.6.1 The role of moderators is to assure the quality and standards and consistency of the marking and feedback. Moderators should review a sample which must include:

- examples of all classifications given
- work marked by all markers for the assignment
- all fails above 20

1.6.2 The sample should include at least 10% of student work or five pieces of work, whichever is higher. Where there are more than 200 pieces submitted, the sample can be limited to 20 as long as this includes all fails above 20, at least one example of each classification and at least one example from all markers for the assessment piece. If there are fewer than five pieces of submitted work for the assessment then all should be reviewed.

1.6.3 Moderators should not change individual students' marks but the first markers and moderators should agree whether marks require review across the particular piece of assessment or module, which may lead to marks being adjusted. In the case of a major discrepancy all the work should be double marked following the procedure outlined in section 1.5.

1.6.4 A record must be kept of the pieces of work included in the sample and whether the moderators agreed the marking was of the appropriate standard or whether any further review was needed. This should be submitted to the Head of Department or nominee. An example template for this purpose is included in appendix C. This record should be retained for the same period as the assessment itself.

2. Assessment of group work

2.1 Group work with a permanent output should be subject to the normal marking processes, noting that university policy is that group marks (where a single, shared mark is given to the group rather than each student being marked individually for their contribution) cannot constitute more than 25 per cent of any module. Where there is no permanent output the marking policy relating to this must be followed with double marking of any item worth above 5 credits, as per section 1.3.

3. Anonymous marking

3.1 The University operates an institution-wide policy of anonymous marking for all summative assessment where possible. Appendix A sets out the policy requirements relating to anonymous marking.

4. Regulations relating to markers

4.1 Conflicts of interest

4.1. Staff should not mark or moderate the work of partners or close relatives or other individuals where a clear conflict of interest could occur.

4.1. Staff should not act as moderator or double marker where their partner or close relative is the first marker.

4.2 The use of external markers

4.2. Marking is normally to be undertaken by permanent teaching staff or by others who have been directly employed to teach on the relevant module, including Assistant Lecturers and Graduate Laboratory Assistants. Marking may be undertaken by markers who do not fulfil this criterion ('external markers'), including where learning is practice or work-based and assessed accordingly. Any use of markers who have not taught on the module and are not permanent members of teaching staff should be approved in advance by the Faculty Dean, with the Department requesting this arrangement providing a clear explanation as to how the University's obligations to academic quality and standards will be maintained and monitored through this arrangement.

4.3 New markers

4.3. The first substantial (as judged by the department) piece of work completed by any marker who is completing marking at the University of Essex for the first time should be moderated even where not otherwise required by this policy. This includes, but is not limited to, newly appointed Assistant Lecturers and Graduate Laboratory Assistants. The department may choose to extend this additional moderation beyond the first piece where it would be beneficial or aid staff development.

4.4 The role of the External Examiner

4.4. Unless the External Examiner has been sent work specifically to arbitrate on a dispute between internal markers, the External Examiner's role is not to act as a second marker. The Module External Examiner is providing an independent overview of the consistency of approaches to assessment. As such, the Module External Examiner's primary concern is with the overall

marking standard in the module rather than with marks obtained by individual students. The External Examiner should not alter the marks of any individual student directly and unilaterally. They may act as an arbitrator in specific circumstances, see 1.4.2.

5. Requests from students to have their work re-marked

5.1. All students have the right to request a meeting to discuss their mark in a piece of assessment and the reason for it with an appropriate member of staff.

5.2 Students have the right to request re-marking of a piece of work on the following grounds:

- the student has been disadvantaged by a failure to follow University procedure, including by the marker not following the published marking criteria for the assessment, or by an administrative error
- there is evidence of prejudice and/or bias in the marking process relating to the piece of work.

5.3 Requests for re-marks on the grounds of disagreement with a mark or grade and/or with the academic judgement of the marker(s) will not be accepted. Students are strongly encouraged to meet the marker or another appropriate member of staff to discuss their mark before submitting any request, as outlined in 5.1.

5.4 The re-mark procedure should not be used in cases where the student believes that the mark does not represent their true capabilities due to the impact of extenuating circumstances on their performance. The Extenuating Circumstances Policy (.pdf) must be followed in any such case. It should be noted that Extenuating Circumstances cannot be used to change marks and are not considered within marking; it is not possible within this policy for marks to be imputed (i.e. a guess to be made about how the student would have performed under different circumstances).

5.5 Requests for re-marks should be submitted to the relevant Department within 14 calendar days of the student receiving the mark. The student should set out the grounds for requesting a remark in line with 5.2. The request should be considered by a panel of at least three members of staff. Where this panel agrees that re-marking is justified, either single, moderated or double marking must be completed, as required for the original submission. The mark that is arrived at through this re-mark will stand as the final mark, whether higher or lower than the mark originally given.

5.6 Where a majority of the panel agrees that the request is not justified, the student must be informed in writing with the reasons for the decision.

5.7 Requests for re-marking can only be made relating to marks that have not yet been ratified by a Board of Examiners. Where the mark in question has been confirmed by a Board of Examiners the Academic Appeals Procedure must be used. Applications for Appeals will be accepted only where they meet the requirements set out within that procedure.

6. Exemption from the University's Marking Policy

6.1 If a department believes it is not possible to comply with an aspect of the Marking Policy, the Department should liaise with their respective Faculty Dean (Undergraduate or Postgraduate) and Faculty Quality & Academic Development Manager in the first instance for advice on implementation of the policy and to prepare a recommendation for approval by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Executive Dean if necessary. Such recommendations should focus on how quality and standards can be assured under the suggested alternative arrangements. A record of all approved arrangements that deviate from the Marking Policy should be retained to support reporting and assurance through the academic governance structures.

Appendix A: Policy on anonymous marking of summative assessment

1. Duration of anonymity

1.1 When work is marked anonymously, anonymity should be maintained until the marks for the piece of work have been released to students and throughout all stages of marking and moderation. Where any work is re-marked due to procedural error or evidence of bias the work should again be marked anonymously.

2. Circumstances when it is not practical for work to be marked anonymously

2.1 It is recognised that it is not practical for all assessment to be marked anonymously. Where it is has been approved in line with this policy that anonymous marking is not required, Departments should make students aware, in advance of the assessment task, that their work will not be marked anonymously.

2.2 Assessment which falls into the following groups will not be marked anonymously and there is no requirement for the Department to seek permission not to use anonymous marking. This applies to individual pieces of coursework, and not to assessment for a whole module, unless all pieces fall into these categories.

a. Marks which are based on observation of students

This includes performance-based coursework, student presentations, practical demonstrations or activities, and marks for participation or contribution to class discussion. These cannot be marked anonymously but a permanent output should be kept where possible.

b. Work where the marker has had interaction with the student such that the student's work cannot be anonymous to that marker

This includes laboratory work, assessment of work-based learning activities, specific dissertation or capstone projects where the student has received close supervision to an extent that prevents

anonymity being maintained, and agreed forms of assessment and feedback in the case of individual student learning needs.

3. Other circumstances when identity may be revealed

3.1 In the following circumstances, anonymity may be lifted:

a. Where it is not possible to maintain anonymity and carry out our duty of care or to follow a policy or procedure effectively, including:

- investigation into a suspected academic offence, and marking of work submitted in response to a penalty relating to an academic offence
- where the nature of work submitted for an assignment raises concerns that a student, or someone else, may be at risk of serious harm

b. Where marks from another institution contribute towards an award

Marks awarded by other institutions, for example those which are recognised from study abroad, will follow the other institution's policy on anonymous marking.

Requests for non-anonymous marking

3.2 Where a Department recommends that it is not practical for anonymous marking to be used for assessed work other than those listed in section 2, the Director of Education is required to make a case in writing to the Faculty Dean via the Quality and Academic Development team. The decision of the Faculty Dean on whether non-anonymous assessment is permitted will be final.

3.3 Requests should be made annually and will be considered for individual assessments. Where reassessment does not mirror the format of original assessment tasks, a separate anonymity waiver request will be required for the reassessment.

Appendix B: Overview of summative assessment marking process

Student assessment submitted and marked by the first marker

Where required: moderation or double marking is carried out

Either moderation or double marking is carried out as required by the marking policy, unless the work is:

- single assessment items contributing a proportion of the module assessment equivalent to 5 credits or fewer. Where all assessment pieces on a module fall into this category at least one must be moderated, and moderation must also be carried out if this is the first time the member of staff is marking at the University of Essex
- assessment where the marking does not require academic judgement or is marked according to a marking schedule

Where moderation or double marking is required, sufficient time must be allowed for this and records of its completion must be kept and submitted to the Head of Department or nominee.

A check on marks and their allocation to students is performed

This must be performed for all assessment before provisional mark release, including for work requiring only single marking. It must be checked, where relevant, that all marks have been added correctly and that marks have been assigned to the correct students.

Provisional marks and feedback are released to students (if due to be released prior to the Board of Examiners)

Samples are shared with the External Examiner for their review

External Examiners should be sent the following as a minimum:

- at least 10% of examples across all classifications (including fails).
- if the cohort is under five, all student work should be seen

Samples should include all of a sample student's work and classifications should be calculated on the module aggregate unless there is a variation to the Rules of Assessment requiring students to pass all assessments. The full range of assessed work (dissertations, examination scripts and so forth) should be sent.

The Board of Examiners meets and confirms marks

Final marks are released to students

Appendix C: Template records of moderation and double-marking

The templates below are given as examples; there is no requirement to use these forms and they can be adapted to department need as appropriate, but departments must ensure that records are kept that allow for others, including External Examiners, to review the moderation and double marking processes. For moderation this must include a record of which pieces were included in the sample.

Record of moderation

Module code and title:	
Module lead:	
Title of assessment:	
Submission date for the assessment:	

The sample for moderation should include:

- examples of all classifications given
- examples from all markers
- all fails above 20

The sample should be 10% of submitted pieces or five pieces, whichever is greater, unless there are more than 200 submitted pieces in which case a sample of 20 can be taken.

Student registration number	Marker	Mark given	Comments by moderator

Student registration number	Marker	Mark given	Comments by moderator

Moderators should comment on the quality and standards and consistency of the marking and feedback. Moderators should not change individual students' marks but the first marker and moderator should agree whether marks require review across the particular piece of assessment or module, which may lead to marks being adjusted. In the case of a major discrepancy all the work should be double marked.

Required Fields	Moderator overall comments
Response from first marker:	
Moderator signature:	
Date of completion:	

This form should be returned by the moderator to xxx@essex.ac.uk.

Record of double marking

Module code and title:	
First marker:	
Second marker:	
Title of assessment:	
Submission date for the assessment:	

Double marking can be either open (where the second marker has access to the comments and marks of the first) or closed (where they do not). Which should be used is determined at department or, where necessary, subject level and markers should be informed which is used in their own department.

Marks should be reconciled (agreed between the two markers) not simply averaged.

Student registration number	Mark given by first marker	Mark given by second marker	Final (reconciled) mark	Comments on reconciliation (optional)

First marker signature:	
Second marker signature:	
Date of completion:	

This form should be returned by the first marker, copying in the second, to xxx@essex.ac.uk. Where reconciliation of some or all marks is not possible for any reason the markers should contact xxx@essex.ac.uk to discuss how to proceed.

Document Control Panel

Field	Description
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Policy Classification	Policy
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Security Rationale	N/A
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